

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	
HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS	3.400

HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS POLICY¹

Overview and Rationale

The assessment program is consistent with legislative intent as specified in the accountability provisions of the state *Education Improvement Act* (1992) and the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001). The program is consistent with the State Board of Education's *High School Policy*, which emphasizes school-wide reform to ensure that all students meet high standards. The assessment program focuses on enabling all students to succeed in challenging coursework by beginning with use of results of the 7th and 8th grade TCAP for diagnostic purposes to determine the appropriate educational experience for entering 9th grade students. School systems will determine the appropriate array of programs; schools will incorporate strategies into their school improvement process. The focus must be on providing high quality instruction, sometimes over extended periods of time, so that all students can be successful. Schools will also use examinations administered in high school for diagnostic purposes.

The purposes to be served and the rationale for testing include the following:

- 1. Improvement of Student Learning in Core Content Areas.** The examinations will align with the curriculum standards and will include both content knowledge and critical thinking skills.
- 2. Preparation for Further Learning.** The examinations will occur early in the student's high school program of study and help prepare them for success in subjects taken later.
- 3. Diagnostic Information.** The examinations will help students to improve their performance and help prepare them for the ACT, SAT and Work Keys and successful entry into postsecondary educational programs.
- 4. School and Program Improvement.** The examinations will provide data that can be used to improve the effectiveness of the instructional delivery system at the school and the school system.
- 5. Accountability.** The examinations will provide for teacher, school and school system accountability as called for in the EIA. To provide for school and school system accountability, the proposed program provides for examinations in four areas: English, mathematics, science, and social studies. These subjects are important for the successful transition to work and postsecondary study. The state will report results for academic achievement and academic gain; the State Board of Education will include results in revised performance standards. Students will take the examinations in the year they complete the relevant content standards and course work. The data generated by the high

¹ Formerly this policy was called the High School End-of-Course Tests policy.

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school assessment program will be linked to data on the optional exit exams - ACT, SAT, and Work Keys.

To provide for student accountability, the program requires all students to achieve satisfactory scores on gateway examinations in mathematics, English language arts, and science to be administered upon completion of the content standards. For most students, these examinations are first administered at the completion of Algebra I, English II, and Biology I. This requirement is effective beginning with students entering 9th grade in 2001-2002. These examinations cover the essential skills needed for successful completion of a challenging high school program of study and occur early enough in a student's program of study to provide multiple opportunities to pass.

Elements of the Program

1. All students must achieve a passing score on gateway examinations in mathematics, English language arts, and science to be administered upon completion of the content standards. For most students, these tests are first administered at the completion of Algebra I, English II, and Biology I. Students who complete Math for Technology II will take the mathematics gateway examination. The state will design or secure high quality tests that measure both content knowledge and critical thinking skills.

- a. Students entering 9th grade in 2001-2002 must successfully complete the requirement in order to receive a regular diploma.
- b. The state will establish passing scores after field testing; use commonly accepted statistical methods; and consider a gradual increase in passing scores.
- c. The state will phase out the current Tennessee Competency Test as it phases in the new examinations. Students entering the 9th grade in 2000-2001 will be the last cohort to be able to satisfy the graduation requirement by taking the Competency Test.
- d. Students will take the examinations when they complete the content standards.
- e. The state and school systems will provide extensive staff development to teachers in both content knowledge and teaching strategies so that students are taught by highly qualified teachers. The cost of staff development will be a component of the cost of the testing package.
- f. The test design will take into account the needs of special populations and ensure that appropriate modifications are available.

2. End-of-course examinations will be administered in the following subjects: Math Foundations II, Geometry, Algebra II, Physical Science, Chemistry, English I, and U. S. History. A test of writing, which measures cumulative writing ability, will also be administered in high school.

- a. The state will report scores for schools and school systems for academic achievement and academic gain.

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- b. Students will take the examinations in the semester they complete the relevant course work.
 - c. Results of individual student performance from all administered end-of-course examinations as well as the three gateway examinations will be provided to the individual teacher in a timely fashion to facilitate the inclusion of these results as part of the student's grade. The results will count no less than fifteen percent of the student's grade in the semester in which the examination was administered.
- 3. Schools will use results of the 7th and 8th grade TCAP assessments for diagnostic purposes in determining an appropriate educational program for each student.
- 4. School systems will determine how best to meet the needs of students who score below the proficient level. Schools will include in their school improvement plans strategies for ensuring academic success and providing intervention and assistance. Such strategies could include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Pre-high school summer programs
 - b. After school programs
 - c. Course work offered over an extended time, with additional units receiving elective credit.
- 5. Local boards of education will determine how to use the results of high school examinations as part of course grades in accordance with this policy. Local policies may allow students who successfully complete remediation to receive credit in the relevant course. In order to provide results in a timely manner, the Department of Education will provide schools with access to scanners, so that students' scores can be determined prior to sending tests to a central location for processing.
- 6. The state will administer gateway examinations and end-of-course examinations in accordance with the following:
 - a. The gateway examinations in mathematics, English language arts, and science will be untimed. The subject matter examinations in English I, Math Foundations, Algebra II, Geometry, Physical Science, Chemistry and U.S. History will be timed.
 - b. Seventh and eighth grade students who meet the gateway content standards are eligible to take the corresponding gateway examination to meet the criteria for fulfilling their high school diploma requirements.